

WATER QUALITY TEAM MEETING NOTES

November 13, 2001

**National Marine Fisheries Service Offices
Portland, Oregon**

Introductions and Review of the Agenda.

Mary Lou Soscia of EPA and Mark Schneider of NMFS, WQT co-chairs, welcomed everyone to the meeting, held November 13 at the National Marine Fisheries Service offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The meeting agenda and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B. Please note that some of the enclosures referenced in these meeting notes may be too lengthy to routinely attach to the minutes; please contact Kathy Ceballos (503/230-5420) to obtain copies.

1. Recommendations and Decision Regarding Total Dissolved Gas Fixed Monitoring Stations.

Schneider reminded the group that this action is a result of a specific action item, or RPA, in the 2000 BiOp – to review the fixed monitoring stations in the Columbia, beginning with the Camas/Washougal station. A WQT subgroup was formed to deal with this, he said; we're now to the point where we should be able to wrap this up fairly quickly. The subgroup met last week to review the work we've done to date, he said, and to develop and apply some screening criteria, mainly having to do with the representativeness of each station -- the degree to which they truly represent what is going on in the river.

We did that, Schneider said; what I have handed out is a brief summary of that meeting (Enclosure C). He noted that this is a strawman exercise only, not a final assessment, and emphasized that this analysis applies to the 2001 water year only. Schneider spent a few minutes going through this document, which first described the screening criteria applied:

1. Representative of Fish Experience
 - a. Spring migrants – near-shore and thalweg orientation
 - b. Summer migrants – shore orientation
2. Consistency
 - a. Predictability
 - b. Reliability – FMS serviceability
3. Useful in real-time decision-making?

4. Project releases affect water quality

The handout then went on to assess each station (Camas/Washougal, Skamania, Warrendale, Bonneville forebay, The Dalles tailrace and The Dalles forebay) based on each of the four criteria:

FMS Location	Criterion 1	2	3	4
Camas/ Washougal	Yes but atypical	A d e q u a t e , environmental factors	A d e q u a t e , environmental factors	Effects are secondary to environmental factors
Skamania	No, eddy	Atypical	Infrequent	Atypical
Warrendale	Yes, weak	Atypical	Infrequent	Atypical
BON FB	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
TDA TR	Yes	No, mix of PH and TR	Yes	No, mix of PH and TR
TDA FB	No, OR shore, PH influence	No	No, use JDA TR FMS data	No, does poor job

Basically, said Schneider, our conclusion was that Camas/Washougal should continue to be a fixed monitoring location, although NMFS would recommend the installation of a second station that would provide a better picture of what is happening in the main channel – possibly in the Corbett vicinity. With respect to the Skamania and Warrendale stations, the subgroup's recommendation was that it be proposed that Skamania not be maintained next year, but that monitoring continue at the Warrendale station. However, further consultation with the Oregon and Washington water quality agencies is needed before that decision is made.

With respect to the Bonneville forebay station, said Schneider, the groups recommendation was that this station continue to operate; it is a good station and does meet the criteria. Margaret Filardo added that, contrary to the conclusion in the above table, the Bonneville forebay station is used for real-time decision making, particularly regarding spill at The Dalles.

Moving on to The Dalles tailrace station, Schneider said the subgroup's conclusion was that it should stay where it is. With respect to The Dalles forebay station, the subgroup's conclusion was that the station should be moved to a fully-mixed portion of the reservoir; there was also some discussion of adding a second fixed monitoring station, although Joe Carroll said the Corps' preference would be to move the current monitoring station closer to the middle of the river, near the end of the powerhouse, the exact location to be determined by the study the Corps is undertaking in support of RPA 132. In response to a question, Carroll said the Corps' intent is to conclude those studies prior to the start of the 2002 spill season.

The group spent a few minutes debating the validity of these conclusions, offering a variety of clarifications, opinions and corrections. At the close of this exercise, Schneider asked whether the WQT is willing to endorse the subgroup's recommendations, so that the subgroup can continue working its way through assessment of all the adequacy of the rest of the FCRPS fixed monitoring stations. After a brief discussion, the WQT agreed to endorse the conclusions of the fixed monitoring station subgroup, and expressed support for the continuation of the assessment to upstream fixed monitoring sites.

2. Update on Water Quality Plan Discussions with Action Agencies.

Soscia noted that a Water Quality Plan was required as an RPA in the 2000 BiOp. There was some confusion about what, exactly, the BiOp prescribes in this area, Schneider said; an attempt has been made to get the plan underway, and after a series of meetings, I think we're more or less on track. Part 1 will deal only with the actions required to avoid jeopardy, Schneider said. He added that a table showing all of the activities required to avoid jeopardy has been developed, and is available for distribution.

The Biological Opinion also included a water quality appendix, Soscia said; in that appendix, a water quality plan is also required. The appendix includes things not required, but outside the scope of, the Endangered Species Act. We are in the process of developing this plan, she said, and as soon as it has buy-off from the federal action agencies, we will be able to share that plan with the rest of the WQT. Schneider said he will distribute copies of the RPA required actions matrix to the WQT via email.

3. TMDL Update.

Soscia distributed a handout (Enclosure D), hard copies of an overhead presentation titled "Columbia/Snake River Mainstem TMDL," which was shown at the recent TMDL workshops in Lewiston and Pasco. Soscia spent a few minutes going through this presentation, touching on the geographic scope of the TMDL development effort, the TMDLs under development, other related activities, Clean Water Act requirements, what a TMDL is, state and tribal participation in the effort, Columbia/Snake TMDL listings for temperature and dissolved gas, the roles of the various key players in the effort, consultation and coordination with the tribes, the Lake Roosevelt TDG TMDL, coordination and outreach efforts, the technical process, and where to go for more information. Please refer to Enclosure D for details of Soscia's presentation.

With respect to the current status of this effort, Oregon and Washington will be issuing the Lower Columbia TDG TMDL in late February or early March, Soscia said, a series of public meetings have been scheduled for the week of January 22-28. A draft Lower Columbia TDG TMDL is out for comment; those comments need to be submitted by November 16, in order for them to be incorporated into the draft that will be released for public comment by December 1.

EPA is working on the water temperature TMDL, including discussions of how to integrate Lake Roosevelt in that analysis, Soscia said; EPA is taking the lead on that effort. EPA

has given a grant to the National Fish and Wildlife Federation to provide funds for tribal participation in this effort, Soscia said; we're working on a letter to all 14 Columbia Basin tribal chairs to invite them to consult with us; that letter should be sent out in the next two weeks or so. We're continuing to meet on a monthly basis to address technical, policy and outreach issues, Soscia said; other meetings have been scheduled regularly to discuss technical issues, and to reach out to the public. She noted that the EPA website is a font of information about these upcoming meetings. Soscia added that coordination with the water quality plan development process remains a key concern for EPA.

4. Chief Joseph Spillway Deflectors Update.

Chris Maynard said that, briefly, Seattle COE has done a lot of work, running all sorts of engineering studies on the effects of Chief Joseph flow deflectors on dissolved gas levels downstream. The results were positive, and the Corps submitted this project as part of the CRFM budget for FY'02, Maynard said. Unfortunately, however, there is presidential moratorium on new construction starts. I further understand that the Senate has not included Chief Joseph flow deflectors in their CRFM appropriation, said Maynard. While the project isn't quite dead yet, Maynard said, realistically, the Chief Joseph flow deflectors are likely out of the running for FY'02. That's unfortunate, Maynard said, because in my opinion, the Chief Joseph flow deflectors are one of the single most-important things we could be doing to abate dissolved gas in the system. Soscia agreed, saying that anything the WQT membership can do to help make this project happen would be richly appreciated.

5. Summary of Transboundary Gas Group Meeting, Castlegar, B.C. October 23-24.

Schneider distributed copies of the agenda for the October 23-24 TGG meeting in Castlegar, B.C.; he spent a few minutes going through its contents. He noted that most of the first-day session was devoted to a discussion of the four specific tasks the TGG has been working on, including U.S./Canada treaty issues, the characterization of transboundary existing gas conditions, the identification of data and information needs for screening models and the identification of structural and operational gas abatement alternatives. On Day 2, said Soscia, much of the discussion focused on the treaty implications for dissolved gas management, as well as on the next activities of the TGG. The next TGG meeting was set for April 9-10 at the Douglas PUD offices in Wenatchee, Washington; a field trip will be planned.

Schneider added that a major international conference, "Castlegar II – Toward Ecosystem-Based Management" has been set for April 27-May 1, 2002 at the city center Doubletree Hotel in Spokane, Washington; he said he has been heavily involved in planning the dissolved gas portion of the agenda. The call for papers has gone out; abstracts are due by January 15.

6. Briefing on Oregon Total Dissolved Gas Waivers.

Russell Harding reported that, with respect to the Oregon waiver process for 2002,

USFWS has not yet submitted its waiver request for the Spring Creek Hatchery release. A meeting has been scheduled between the Corps and Oregon on December 10 to talk about TMDLs and dissolved gas waivers. Keep in mind that, once a request is received, we need to put it out for a 30-day public comment period; the Commission will also be meeting in January and March, 2002, Harding said. You will recall that the EQC was less than pleased that a special meeting was necessary to discuss the dissolved gas waiver for the spill program in 2001; they have indicated that they will be even less pleased if another special meeting is required in 2002. That means that any waiver request in support of the spill program this spring needs to be in our hands by January 2002, Harding said.

7. Next WQT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Water Quality Team was set for Tuesday, December 11. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.